



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

ton manuscript has, however, one serious limitation: it is incomplete, and hence furnished only a part of Morris's text, the rest being supplied by ms. Harleian 4196, itself also incomplete. The Rawlinson manuscript, on the other hand, presents an entire and homogeneous text of the poem. Moreover, it is, according to the best authorities, in a handwriting some fifty years older than that of the Cotton manuscript, Mr. Madan<sup>3</sup> dating it about 1350, while according to Mr. Ward<sup>4</sup> the Cotton manuscript belongs to the fifteenth century.

*The Prick of Conscience* is the first of the collection of poems preserved in the Rawlinson manuscript; it extends from folio 1 to folio 55a. It is written in double columns of 44 lines each; hence it numbers about 9600 lines. The handwriting is not so large and clear as that of the Cotton manuscript, but it is nevertheless quite legible. The first column of the first page is considerably faded and in part worn away, but there are no serious obscurations after this page.

I give below a copy of a few lines from the beginning and from the end.

## I.

þe myght of þe fader all myghty,  
þe witt of þe son all witty,  
And þe guddnes of þe haly gaste,  
[A godde]<sup>5</sup> and lord of myghtes maste,  
[Be wy]th vs and vs help *and* spede,  
[Now] and euer, in all our nede;  
[And s]pecially [at þ]is bigynyng,  
And bryng vs all till gud endyng. Amen.

Bifor any thing was wrought,  
And ar any bigynyng was of oght,  
And bifor all tymes, als we sal trow,  
þe same god ay was þat es now,  
[þat wo]ned euer in his god hede,  
[And] in thre persons *and* ane hede.  
[For go]d wald ay *with* þe fader *and* þe son  
[And wi]th þe haligast in anehede won,

<sup>3</sup> *Summary Catalogue of Western Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library*, III, p. 321, Oxford, 1895.

<sup>4</sup> See his *Catalogue of Romances in the Department of Manuscripts in the British Museum*, II, p. 213, London, 1893. According to others, however, the Cotton manuscript belongs to the second half of the fourteenth century; see Tyrwhitt, *Canterbury Tales*, IV, p. 330 note, London, 1775; Ritson, *Ancient English Metrical Romances*, III, p. 229, London, 1802; and Morris, *l. c.*, p. iv.

<sup>5</sup> The bracketed parts are supplied from Morris's edition, p. 1, the Rawlinson manuscript being illegible here.

[Als go]d in a substance *and* beyng  
[Withouten] any bigynyng;  
[Beg]ynyng of him myght neuer nane be,  
[He] was ay god in trinite,  
[þat] was ay als wise *and* full of witt,  
[And] als myghty als he es yhit,  
[Wha]s myght and witt of him self was tane,  
[For neuer] na god was bot he all ane.

## II.

And yhe þat has herd þis tetryce red  
þat now es broght till ende *and* sped,  
For þe luf of our louerd ihesu,  
Pray for him specially þat it drew,  
þat if he lyf, god saue him harmles,  
And mayntene his lyfe in all gudnes,  
And if he be ded, als falles kyndely,  
God of his saule haue mercy,  
And bryng it till þat blysfull place  
Where endeles joy es and solace,  
Till whilk place he vs all bryng  
þat for vs vouched safe on rode to hyng. Amen.

KILLIS CAMPBELL.

*The University of Texas.*

LEMERCIER'S *Méléagre*.

Literary critics and literary historians have given much attention in recent years to the French dramatists of the pre-romantic period, and one dramatist in particular, Népomucène Lemercier (1771-1840), has been much discussed. Many errors, however, exist in regard to the facts of Lemercier's career, and one of them has been repeated so many times, that the truth at last deserves a hearing.

Lemercier's first play, *Méléagre*, a tragedy in five acts and in verse, was performed at the Théâtre Français, February 29, 1788, about a month before the author's seventeenth birthday. The Princesse de Lamballe, Lemercier's god-mother, had heard the play read, and her enthusiasm for the new tragedy was so great that she prevailed upon Marie Antoinette to command a public performance at the earliest possible moment. On that first night the theatre was crowded, for the youth of the poet and the fact that he was known to be favored by the Court, excited general interest. The Queen accompanied by the

Princesse de Lamballe, occupied the royal loge, and there was a most brilliant audience.

The play was applauded for its many *beaux vers*, and was considered a wonderful performance for one so young, although it received harsh treatment at the hands of the critics. But whatever its merits or defects, *Méléagre* was never given a second time. Grimm said<sup>1</sup>: "Ce jeune auteur et ses amis ont eu le bon esprit de retirer la pièce après la première représentation." M. Ernest Legouvé relates<sup>2</sup> that after the performance Lemer cier went behind the scenes, to thank the actors, according to the prevailing custom, and then asked the prompter to give him the manuscript for a few corrections. He took it away, and the next day, M. Legouvé says, he wrote the following letter to the members of the Comédie :

"*Messieurs* :—

Mon succès d'hier m'a beaucoup touché, mais ne m'a pas fait illusion. Ma pièce est une œuvre d'enfant, c'est un enfant que le public a applaudi pour l'encourager ; je n'ai qu'une manière de me montrer digne de son indulgence, c'est de ne pas en abuser. De telles bontés ne se renouvellent pas. Je retire mon ouvrage et je tâcherai que ma seconde tragédie soit plus digne de vos talents."

Whereupon there was great confusion at the theatre among the actors who had been looking forward to a number of profitable performances.

This explanation of the single performance of the play has been accepted without question. Vauthier in his thesis on Lemer cier<sup>3</sup> quotes the letter just given, in good faith, Lenient<sup>4</sup> tells the same story, and Le Roy<sup>5</sup> copies the letter in full, without even giving Legouvé credit for it, although his source is evident, from the context. Influenced by this explanation, great things have been said regarding the modesty of the young Lemer-

cier, and his clear judgment as to the real value of his tragedy.

M. Legouvé's letter, however, for which he gives neither reference nor authority, is evidently the creature of his own imagination, when compared with the following communication which actually appeared in the *Journal de Paris*, March 4, 1788 :

"*Aux Auteurs du Journal*.

*Messieurs* :—Permettez moi de me servir de la voie de votre journal pour remercier le Public des applaudissements dont il a daigné m'honorer : je suis trop reconnaissant pour ne pas corriger, autant qu'il est en moi, les défauts de mon Ouvrage. Je n'ai suspendu la seconde représentation de *Méléagre* qu'afin d'avoir le temps de faire les changements nécessaires.

LEMERCIER."

This letter is more than enough to show that Lemer cier had no intention of withdrawing *Méléagre* permanently, nor does it reveal any excessive modesty on his part. Whether his friends finally prevailed upon him to withdraw his play or whether the management of the theatre was unwilling to go on with it, may never be known, but it is certain that this boy of seventeen had no doubt of his own literary ability, and that he was anticipating a continuance of success.

While the point here involved is certainly not of vital importance, it deserves consideration, nevertheless, because hesitation and lack of self-assurance are so entirely foreign to Lemer cier's character, that no careful student of his life and work has been able to accept this oft-repeated story without wonder and surprise.

JOHN R. EFFINGER.

*The University of Michigan.*

<sup>1</sup>*Correspondance littéraire*, vol. xiv, mars 1788.

<sup>2</sup>*Soixante Ans de Souvenirs*, par E. Legouvé, Paris. 4 vols. in-12. Vol. I, p. 80.

<sup>3</sup>*Essai sur la Vie et les Oeuvres de Népomucène Lemer cier*, par G. Vauthier. Toulouse, 1886, gr. in-8, p. 7.

<sup>4</sup>*La Comédie en France au XIX<sup>e</sup> Siècle*, par Ch. Lenient, Paris, 1904. 2 vols. in-8. Vol. I, p. 27.

<sup>5</sup>*L'Aube du Théâtre Romantique*, par Albert Le Roy, Paris, 1904, in-8, p. 135.

## ENGLISH ORTHOGRAPHY.

Two dissertations appeared in 1904 on the English Orthography of the sixteenth century : Rudolf, *Die englische Orthographie von Caxton bis Shakespeare*, Marburg, 1904, and Swearingen, *Die englische Schriftsprache bei Coverdale, mit*